We welcome the readers to this Special Issue of *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies* focused on “Globalization, Education and the Knowledge Economy: Changing International Perspectives on Learning and Technology.” The world today can be characterized by the constant change, called Globalization, which means the integration of the world economies into a single economy. Countries and organizations that accept this change are more likely to succeed in the future, and those that do not might struggle to face the stiff competition. Driven by technological advances, improved communications, economic liberalization, and increased international competition, globalization has brought in an era of educational, economic, institutional, and cultural integration. Over the last decade, the technology choices and issues facing higher learning have changed dramatically, and so have the learning styles and preferences of the learners, given a wide array of learning and technology choices. Learning via interactive, virtual web-based communities and environments is gaining popularity every day as the number of web-supported or web-based courses in training, colleges, and K-12 has and continues to increase significantly (Allen & Seman, 2004, 2008; Picciano, 2001; Setzer & Lewis, 2005). Learning is best accomplished when the individual needs of learners are established well in advance.

The above needs are associated with the learners’ prior knowledge, learning styles, and cognitive traits. The learning environment (whether classroom traditional teaching, virtual Web world, or any form of hybrid learning structures) must support the learners’ needs or else, they might have difficulties in learning. Web Based Learning Environments (WBLE), also called Web Based Learning Systems (WBLS), incorporate the process of ‘adaptation’ and address rightly the cognitive traits and learning styles. By adapting the courses to the prior knowledge of the learners helps them in learning and making learning easier for them. On one hand, where technology initiatives support learning, it can be challenging as well. Web based environments can have multiple environmental and learner-instructor...
Based challenges. Some of them may be the actions of inexperienced instructors or designers who fail to provide individualized feedback, apply appropriate instructional strategies, create sufficient interaction, develop high quality content, build a learning community with social integration, and/or fail to monitor student progress (O’Brien & Renner, 2002; Saba, 2002; Schrum & Benson, 2001; Song, Singleton, Hill & Koh, 2004; Terry, 2001; Vonderwell, 2003; Zheng & Smaldino, 2003). Similarly, learners may be ill-prepared for Web-based learning and technology challenges.

**Changing Global Dimensions:** The technology and learning dimensions have global repertoires. The changing dimensions of ‘technology’ and ‘learning’ have significant impact globally. The recent success of China and India in moving into the production of high value-added, high-technology products has caused political leaders and their advisors to re-evaluate the global economic challenge. The OECD recently acknowledged that emerging economies including China and India were moving up the value chain to compete with Western companies for high-tech products and R&D investment (OECD, 2007). There has been major growth in all OECD countries for expansion into higher education. Canada was the first country to achieve the target of over 50 percent of people aged 25 and 34 to enter the job market with a tertiary level qualification, followed by Korea, which has engineered a massive growth in tertiary provision since 1991. Companies today engage majorly in International Business and they are either global companies already or striving to go global. While much of the international business and policy literature has focused on education, globalization, the use of innovation and creative enterprise, it has ignored the shift towards global standardization or alignment within companies (Brown, Lauder, & Ashton, 2008), where technology is the key enabler and facilitator.

The first article of this special issue titled “Crowdsourcing and Education with Relation to the Knowledge Economy” by Scalise discusses the use of crowdsourcing for educational assessments globally. The article presents new evidence and interesting insights into how examinees respond to use of crowdsourcing. In the second article by DiBello and Missildine, the authors have developed a 16-hour, immersive collective learning experience for mid to high-level project managers for accelerating learning among participants in the Second Life Virtual Worlds platform to test the capacity of Virtual Worlds to be used for running complex, immersive learning and training. Bradford in the third special issue article examines the effect of leader attributes on the collective efficacy of a group of members of Generation Next, and the interrelation of leadership and collective efficacy on the team’s performance. The challenges associated with engaging Generation Next present a remarkable opportunity for educators and practitioners alike. The study considers leadership’s effects on building collective efficacy in teams of Nexters in technology-enabled environments. The fourth article titled “Supporting Mobile Learners: An Action Research Project” by Petrova and Li presents the results of an action research (AR) project in which an SMS based mobile learning service was integrated with classroom teaching in the context of international students studying English before enrolling in regular academic courses with English as the language of instruction. All the four articles in the special issue highlight the changing International perspectives on learning environments through globalization, technology and the emergence of global knowledge economy.

Technology, learning, education and supporting globalization through innovation and creativity leading to a globalized knowledge economy are the main emphasis of this Special Issue of the *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies* (IJWLTT). More specifically, the issue focuses on the impact of globalization on education and business, the changing dimensions of the
WBLT technologies and uses, sharing educational experiences and situations including (but not limited to) distance learning, collaborative work, constructivist approaches in on-line, traditional and hybrid class-rooms, designing blended learning and programs, importance of dialogue in distance education programs, CSCL, network learning, etc. while focusing on the world economies with respect to these worldwide changing perspectives and the creation of a globalized knowledge economy.

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REFERENCES


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